

REMARKS

Claims 1-3 and 5-26 are pending. These claims are unchanged.

In the Office Action, the claims were rejected under 35 USC § 102(e) as anticipated by Agraharam et al. (U.S. Pat. No. 5,987,508). This rejection is not supported by the cited art and should be withdrawn for the reasons below.

Claim 1 is drawn to a method for defining a virtual domain in an electronic messaging system. In particular, claim 1 recites:

defining a virtual domain node corresponding to a real domain name server in a hierarchically organized directory wherein the hierarchically organized directory is a hierarchical structure that resembles a tree with one major branch at the top and many branches and sub-branches below; and

associating a plurality of virtual domain attributes to the virtual domain node. (Emphasis added.)

The Office Action asserts on page 2, paragraph 3, that Agraharam teaches defining a virtual domain node in the form of a “recipient alias telephone number email address telephone#@domain_name.” On the contrary, Agraharam fails to disclose or suggest “defining a virtual domain node,” as recited in claim 1. Instead, Agraharam only describes a routing function in which an email message can be redirected from one address to another. Agraharam only discloses a routing table in the form of a database 117 which a translation server 110 accesses to translate email message addresses from an alias email address to an actual email address (col. 1, lines 39-58; col. 4, lines 45-50). The method of claim 1, on the other hand, provides for “defining a virtual domain node.”

By defining a virtual domain node, as recited in claim 1, this enables “associating a plurality of virtual domain attributes to the virtual domain node,” as also recited in claim 1. This additional feature of claim 1 is not disclosed or suggested by Agraharam, because Agraharam fails to disclose or suggest “defining a virtual domain node” in the first place. The description of “PINs” by Agraharam (col. 7, lines 15-30) is not relevant to the claimed feature of “virtual

domain attributes" associated with the "virtual domain node," as recited in claim 1. Instead, the PINs described by Agrapharam are associated with a user, allowing the user to access the system and manage the user's account (col. 7, lines 16-27). In short, Agrapharam only teaches an email routing or cross-reference function. Agrapharam fails to disclose or suggest defining a virtual domain node," and "associating a plurality of virtual domain attributes to the virtual domain node," as recited in claim 1. Therefore, Agrapharam does not anticipate claim 1, and cannot support a rejection of claim 1 under 35 USC § 102(e). This rejection should be withdrawn.

Dependent claims 2, 3, 5-13, 15, 16, and 17 are dependent upon claim 1 and are, therefore, patentable for at least the same reasons as claim 1.

Independent claims 4, 18 and 26 each incorporate similar features as claim 1 and are, therefore, patentable for similar reasons as claim 1.

Dependent claims 19-24 are dependent upon claim 18 and are, therefore, patentable for at least the same reasons as claim 18.

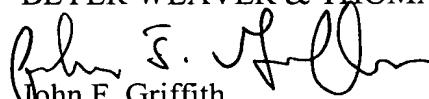
CONCLUSION

In view of the above Amendments and Remarks, Applicant submits that the above-identified application is in condition for allowance. Early notification to that effect is respectfully requested.

Should the Examiner believe that a further telephone conference would expedite the prosecution of this application, Applicant's attorney can be reached at the number below.

Respectfully submitted,

BEYER WEAVER & THOMAS, LLP


John F. Griffith
Registration No. 44,137

P.O. Box 778
Berkeley, CA 94704-0778
(510) 843-6200